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Dear Ocean

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Dear Ocean

You used to mean a kayak, harbour seals,
smooth surfacing porpoises,

you used to mean beauty and risk. Now you mean home:
a floating shack held in place by polypropylene lassos,

styrofoam billets, barge-hull, cookstove-anchor, and cleats.
I paddle your surface in an unpoetic craft, dented and scratched

plastic. Search for gunpowder sea stars, Turkish towel,
devil's apron, *Laminaria*. In your intertidal zone

you coax language from me even when I'm mute as a mussel.
I am a line stretched taut; the words tug.

In my frayed lifejacket, snorkel and mask
I steal up to your cloud-sized spiral of herring,

coast gilled, finned wisdom. Flashes and sparks
dance luminescent in you on certain nights.

My house ropes slacken between chop, ripple, still
to a seal's gentle breathing in the dark.

In the morning the fish fly
slapping the water and me awake.

Oh! what does it mean to be awakened
by a thousand leaping fish?

CHRISTINE LOWTHER's poetry books are *New Power*, *My Nature*, and *Half-Blood Poems*. Her memoir *Born Out of This* was shortlisted for a BC Book Prize. She won the inaugural Rainy Coast Arts Award for Significant Accomplishment from the Pacific Rim Arts Society.